

Office of Violence Prevention

Annual Report to the Governor & Nebraska Legislature

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Introduction

The Director of the Office of Violence Prevention of the Nebraska Commission of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice is responsible for generating an annual report on the Office of Violence Prevention programs in Nebraska by Nebraska Revised Statute § 81-1450. This 2016 report is fulfilling this statutory duty.

The primary responsibility of the State Office of Violence Prevention is to help develop, foster, promote, and assess statewide violence prevention programs in the State of Nebraska.

The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) aids privately funded organizations, local government subdivisions, and other community groups in developing Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement theories and techniques.

Through a competitive grants process administered by the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Crime Commission), the Office of Violence Prevention awards \$350,000 annually to organizations in Nebraska that have shown a history of documented success or new programs which show promise in helping to reduce violent crime in Nebraska.

The grant recipients are required to develop goals, objectives and performance indicators in order to help evaluate the success of the financial distribution. Upon awarding of the funds, grantees are required to submit quarterly activity and cash reports to the Office of Violence Prevention/Crime Commission. Also, grantees are required to provide an evaluation report and a portion of the grant funds can be used for a professional evaluator. The report must provide a comprehensive review of the program's overall effort, and measurable results during the grant cycle. Those results are provided to the Office of Violence Prevention.

The Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Council

In May of 2009, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 63, establishing the Office of Violence Prevention within the Nebraska Crime Commission. A provision within LB 63 provided for the establishment of the Advisory Council to the Office of Violence Prevention. The Governor appointed Advisory Council is to meet quarterly and is directed to recommend – to the Crime Commission -- rules and regulation regarding fundraising, program evaluation, coordination of programs, and criteria used to assess and award funds to violence prevention programs.

Program Priority focus

Priority for funding is given to communities and organizations seeking to implement violence prevention programs which appear to have the greatest benefit to the state and which have, as goals, the reduction of street and gang violence, and the reduction of homicides and injuries caused by firearms. In March of 2015, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 167 which also included the creation of youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas as an additional priority focus.

2016 Grantees

AA Empowerment Network- Omaha 360 Collaborative & Step up Omaha Program: \$57,000

The Empowerment Network Spear heads the Omaha 360 Collaboration. The 360 Collaboration Identifies Omaha's emerging needs then creates strategies and develops plans to address the needed areas. Strategies and plans have been developed in a number of areas including: community engagement; job development and training; education and youth development; business development and entrepreneurship; housing and neighborhood development; violence intervention and prevention; voter registration and participation; arts, culture, and history revitalization; and, communications and media expansion and enhancement. Step up Omaha is a summer youth job program that recruits, trains, and places prepared Omaha youth and young adults age 14 to 21, in mutually beneficial paid summer jobs and work experience opportunities.

Black Men United- Intro to the trades: \$65,679

Intro to the Trades and Soft Skill Training is a program designed to provide entry-level soft skills, career assessments, introductory trade skills and safety training, as well as post program support to incarcerated teens that have been adjudicated as adults due to violent felonies between the ages of 16 - 21. This program is held inside the NCYF will consist of an introduction to the trades, employability training (soft skills, life skills, interview skills, goal setting) and construction basics. It will also include CPR certification and OSHA 10 safety certification, which will significantly enhance job market opportunities for the students. Upon completion, Black Men United will support students, on a voluntary basis, upon release from incarceration, by connecting them directly to job opportunities, additional training opportunities, or helping them navigate entrance into college and with mentors if desired. Graduating students will receive post-release goal setting support, mentoring and direct connection to other critical resources.

Center for Holistic Development Urban Youth BOLT: \$24,648

The purpose of this project is to combat the risks that exist among Omaha's young African Americans. The Center for Holistic Development (CHD) will implement a 10-week program designed to increase the positive attitudes of African Americans via an affirmative reinforcement of the identity of the participants. B.O.L.T. (Building our legacy today) is a culturally specific, developmentally appropriate curriculum designed to address the unique needs of African American youth and to combat negative statistics surrounding social development and academic achievement. This program gives youth and their parents the tools necessary for building internal assets that promote social and emotional competence through the use of adult role models, exposure to African American history using a developmentally appropriate culturally based curriculum.

The Hope Center for Kids- Village Basketball Alliance: \$29,168

The efforts of Omaha 360 through the past four years have prompted youth-serving community organizations to work together to find creative ways to provide impactful activities for young people, particularly in North Omaha. The desire is for young people to be connected to youth-serving organizations where positive, healthy life-style principles are shared. Village Basketball Alliance (VBA) was created in 2011 to support this vision. Village Basketball Alliance youth

will have a safe place to interact without fear of violence and learn positive social skills. Up to 150 youth participate in each 10 week league. Along with the participants in the league, 50-100 peers and family members attend each week to watch the games. As many as 250 people have attended VBA on a weekly basis

Lancaster County- Operation Tipping Point: \$69,540

Operation Tipping Point is a steering committee of community partners and justice stakeholders to address the increasing violent crimes associated with gangs in Lincoln, NE. A full-time Gang specialist will be hired to serve as the linkage between primary and secondary prevention/intervention efforts and engagement of community partners. The project will also assist in the training of LPD Gang Officers.

NorthStar Foundation- Athletic Engagement and Outreach Program: \$63,965

NorthStar Foundation deploys a comprehensive sequence of athletic engagement and outreach programming for low-income, at-risk young men in North Omaha. The NorthStar Athletic Engagement and Outreach Project engages the youth in enriching out-of-school time programming, as well as serves as a vehicle to identify, recruit, and retain beneficiaries targeted for participation in the full complement of after school services throughout the school year.

Omaha Police Athletics Community Engagement- Youth Violence Prevention: \$40,000

The program is dedicated to preventing "at risk", inner-city children from becoming involved in gangs, crime and drug use. It provides an opportunity to develop discipline, self-esteem and positive moral values through wholesome competition in soccer, baseball and volleyball.

2014/2015 Grantees

AA Empowerment Network- Omaha 360 Collaborative & Step up Omaha Program: \$181,956

Black Men United- Urban Pre-Vocational Training Program: \$81,179

Compassion in Action- Raw Dawg Youth Corps: \$30,695

Father Flanagan's (Boys Town) - SOVIP Job Readiness & Back 2 School Bash: \$8,000

Girls Inc. - Girls with Futures: \$27,305

Heartland Family Services- Victim Empathy Program: \$10,386

La Casa Del Pueblo- Omaha Youth Job Training Project: \$32,695

Lancaster County- Operation Tipping Point: \$54,736

NorthStar Foundation- Athletic Engagement and Outreach Program: \$67,390

The Hope Center for Kids- Village Basketball Alliance: \$19,875

Urban League of NE- Youth Empowerment Series: Youthful Offender Re-entry: \$102,478

Completed Evaluations



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
**SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR
THE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS**

College of Public Affairs and Community Service
The Grace Abbott School of Social Work

**The Hope Center for Kids:
Village Basketball Alliance Evaluation Report**

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Purpose of Evaluation

The STEPs evaluation team partnered with Hope Center for Kids to complete a process evaluation of the Village Basketball Alliance (VBA) program. We examined program implementation of VBA session 15 including processes for goal achievement. To accomplish the evaluation, we performed program observations; conducted interviews with key VBA staff, coaches, and community stakeholders; conducted focus groups with players; analyzed the VBA pre-post evaluation survey; and developed and analyzed the player satisfaction survey.

Evaluation Methods

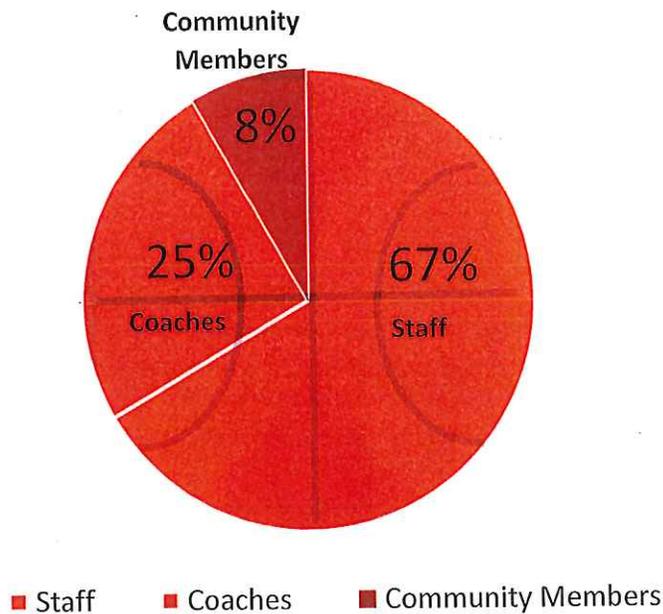
Observational data

The STEPs team conducted four program observations to capture process evaluation data. Two of the observations were of regularly scheduled games, and the remaining observations were of the playoffs and championship game all held on Monday nights from 5-7pm. At each observation, we paid attention to the program activities and interactions between players, coaches, staff, and attendees.

Qualitative data

Twelve interviews were completed with VBA staff (8), coaches (3), and community members (1) (See Appendix A for interview questions). Most of the people we interviewed were Hope Center staff. The Hope Center program coordinator and director identified, coordinated, and scheduled the interviews. Questions for the interviews were developed in partnership with the Hope Center program coordinator and director. The interviews were 45-minutes to one hour in length.

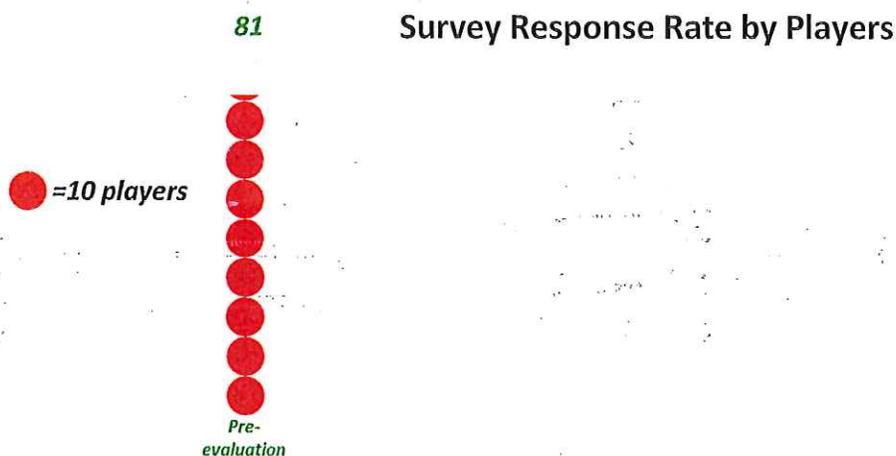
Role of Interviewees



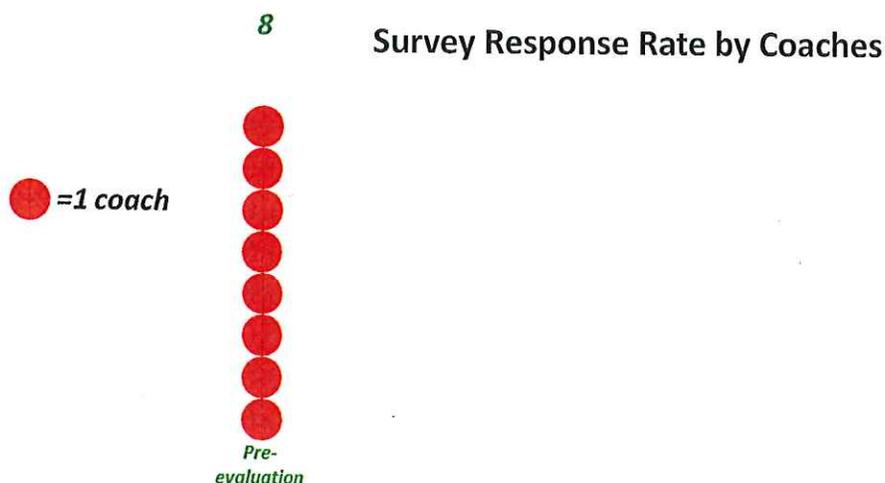
In addition to the interviews, we also completed two focus groups (N=8) with new and returning players. The focus groups were 60-90 minutes in length. The lead program evaluator facilitated the groups and the other STEPs team member was present to take notes. All focus groups were audio recorded and were compared to the notes for accuracy. All names were removed to protect anonymity of players and individuals mentioned in conversation. Audio recordings were deleted immediately after completion of the comparison.

Quantitative data

The player evaluation survey was administered by Hope Center staff at the beginning and end of the VBA program. Out of 117 players, 81 (69%) completed the pre-evaluation survey and 41 out of 117 (35%) completed the post-evaluation survey. After surveys were completed, players were given sports beverages as a token of appreciation.



The coaches' evaluation surveys were also administered at the beginning and end of the program. All eight coaches completed the pre-evaluation survey while six out of eight completed the post-evaluation survey.



The player satisfaction survey was developed in partnership between STEPs and Hope Center for Kids. The satisfaction survey was administered to 31 out of 112 (38%) players at the end of the VBA program. All data from the surveys were entered into a database by Hope Center staff and analyzed by the STEPs team to determine program satisfaction.

Program Overview

The VBA program was created in 2011 through the efforts of Omaha 360, a community-based collaborative, with a vision to connect young people to youth-serving organizations where positive, healthy lifestyle principles are shared. The program is grounded in principles presented by Morley and Rossman (1998) utilizing a community-based collaborative focused on service integration or comprehensive service delivery. These principles are used to address clients' multiple needs by implementing a broad-based continuum of care for youth and families to a variety of services. In VBA, each participating community organization has the common focus of serving youth in the community.

The specific VBA goals set for youth participants are:

- Youth will have a safe place to recreate
- Youth will have a safe place to interact without fear of violence
- Youth will have a safe place to learn positive social skills

The VBA objectives set for youth and coaches are:

- Goal achievement
- Bonding effects
- Protective effects

VBA holds three sessions per year: spring, summer, and fall. Within each session, there are 10 weeks of play. Up to 150 players participate in each league with an average of six teams each session. As many as 250 people attend VBA games. On Tuesday nights, VBA leaders provide a meeting for youth as an outlet to talk about basketball as well as topics like school, jobs, and

families. The meeting is also a way for VBA leaders to provide tools, life skills, and support for youth.

The Hope Center for Kids takes sole responsibility of all program activities for all sessions each year. One month prior to the session start date, potential partners are identified and recruited; VBA coaches and partners hold a coaches' meeting in preparation for the session. Team rosters are finalized and registration fees are paid prior to the first week of the session. At the first week, players and coaches are asked to complete the VBA pre-evaluation survey. Coaches are responsible for getting their players to complete the survey. During the 10 weeks of play, the Hope Center staff host, facilitate, enforce rules and regulations, and work to achieve program goals for the weekly games. The League Championship game is held during the last week of the session. The teams are invited back the following week for the Hope Center Celebration to recognize the winning team with pizza, trophies, individual medals, and administration of the VBA post-evaluation survey. In addition to these responsibilities, Hope Center funds program implementation by applying for funding opportunities.

The program implementation is led by two Hope Center staff members. Below are the staff members' duties and responsibilities:

VBA Program Duties and Responsibilities

Staff member #1	Operate the scoreboard, document game statistics, email information to participating agencies, and other "housekeeping" items.
Staff member #2	Commissioner of the league; crowd control, conduct conflict resolution when necessary, and implement VBA rules.
Supporting staff	Referees, security personnel, and Hope Skate staff are also key contributors to program implementation.

The program evaluation began during week three of VBA session 15. We were unable to observe the activities prior to and at the start of VBA (i.e. community organization recruitment, registration, coaches' meeting, pre-evaluation survey administration for both players and coaches) and therefore will not include findings or recommendations related to majority of those activities.

Findings: Program Implementation

Below we present the program observations and qualitative findings to support recommendations to strengthen program implementation. We also highlight the strongest areas of program implementation.

Perceived Goals of VBA

Most of the staff, coaches, and players were not aware of the stated goals of VBA, but most agreed that the goals of VBA were 1) to learn conflict resolution skills, 2) to provide a safe and positive environment for athletic activity, and 3) to build new relationships. Out of the perceived goals of staff, coaches, and players, only VBA goal 4, "Youth will have a safe place to play basketball," was accurately stated as a program goal.

“To bring the community and youth together...to provide them a safe place to have constructive activity and to build relationships to offer services...and mentorship into grooming them as far as you know job placement, helping with college application, etc. ...it [VBA] can be the stepping stone they need to help them get to the next level of whatever they're trying to do.”

– VBA staff

Perceived Benefits of VBA

Through building relationships with players and coaches, players have positive relationships with other players and find positive role models in their coaches leading to a sense of pride in their community. Interestingly, the staff and players did not see pride in the community as a goal of VBA but rather a benefit. Our program observations confirmed that the players had strong relationships with other players and some players had strong relationships with their coaches.

“One big impact is that all of them grew up together – all of them are friends and may be in rival gangs or hoods but when they come together it's strictly about the competition. This now creates that relationship outside of here where they may encounter each other on the street and diffuse a conflict or senseless act of violence on the streets.” –VBA Staff

Barriers to Program Implementation

Most of the staff, coaches, and players identified four common barriers of VBA program implementation: 1) understaffed, 2) excessive profanity use by players, 3) lack of communication of rules, and 4) lack of community involvement and attendance.

First, most stated that VBA staff changed inconsistently each session or in the middle of the session and there are not enough staff members to ideally run the program. For instance, one staff member will wear “multiple hats.” Our observations confirmed these findings. There was inconsistency in staff positions as indicated in the program overview. The commissioner was the only consistent staff member in the program. At times the commissioner would take on the roles of staff member #1 (scorekeeper and player statistics) on nights the program was understaffed which was observed as a daunting task. Even when a staff member was available to keep score and statistics, it seemed like an overwhelming job if the person did not have experience in the position. For instance, staff would struggle to pay attention to the game and know when to stop the clock while simultaneously trying to write down the players' points, rebounds, and fouls in the statistic book. In addition to staying focused on these two tasks, players would approach the table and ask about their statistics further complicating the staff's ability to perform both roles.

Second, most staff and coaches identified that players excessively used profanity throughout game play making the environment uncomfortable for attendees and some staff members. However, some staff acknowledged that some profanity use is acceptable when you have a highly competitive environment such as VBA. Our observations indicated there was some profanity used but it did not seem to be excessive. We concur that the environment is indeed competitive leading to a display of passion in players which at times manifested in profanity.

“The hope would be when you come back next year, the person is different. Teaching the life skill of how to disagree appropriately without the temper tantrum and the cursing.” – VBA Staff

Third, most staff, coaches, and players were not completely clear of the VBA rules. For instance, the officiating rules and procedures for implementing VBA (e.g. designated areas for players versus attendees) were not known to majority of players who participated in the focus groups. Staff and coaches expressed that they were aware of some of the rules, but changes were not clearly communicated. Our observations confirmed that the rules were unclear. At times, the game play would stop to clarify a rule. Players and coaches were upset or confused when a referee made a call inconsistent with their perception of the rules.

“Communication seems to be a big barrier – it seems like every session there’s never a thorough understanding of rules, signing up, refs, paying people, kind of the whole thing” –VBA Staff

Lastly, most staff, coaches, and players discussed the lack of community involvement and attendance. Over the years, the community attendance has waned and most staff and players believed community involvement is necessary for the program to thrive and gain recognition. We observed an average of 20 attendees. Many of the individuals attending were Hope Center members and staff. About half of those attendees were friends or family members of the players, coaches, or staff. The playoff and championship games yielded the highest attendance numbers with an average of 30 attendees.

“I’d like to see them invite the community to see what these young men are doing so they don’t have a stigma in this pool of 18-35 year olds that won’t do anything or be anything or stereotyped based on what’s seen in the media. But a lot of these young men are doing great things (e.g. run their own businesses, unionizing, one of the former members was Terrence “Bud” Crawford who has turned his life around) and I think people need to see that and support them.” – VBA staff

Suggested Improvements by Staff and Coaches

The staff and coaches identified an extensive list of suggested improvements to the VBA program. The commonly suggested improvements included:

- Better marketing to promote league and games
- Better communicate VBA rules with an official rulebook
- Hire more staff
- Better enforce sportsman-like behavior
- Involve alumni in VBA (e.g., coach team for Junior VBA, train highly motivated alumni to take over program)
- Recruit different and more teams
- Expand the league

“Marketing brings growth to bring attention to your product or brand so we need to get more exposure...” – VBA staff

Most of the staff and coaches offered strategies to implement some of the suggested improvements:

- Include halftime performances such as local drill teams
- Allow organizations to sell goods
- Invite community organizations to consistently attend games and offer their services
- Identify motivated and committed VBA alumni to step into leadership roles in the VBA program

Most staff and coaches believed these changes would improve VBA and help the program to expand beyond the North Omaha area.

“I would love to see a youth movement with VBA and those getting older to continue to work and come back and help the younger kids and teach them about what they went through to help prevent them from making the same mistakes.” – VBA staff

Suggested Improvements by Players

The players also provided a list of suggested improvement for the program. The most common suggested improvements were:

- Better or different referees
- Make efforts to get the community more involved in attending the games

Many of the players believed some of the referees were fair while others were “no good” and should be replaced. The players believed some of the referees should be replaced because they showed favoritism toward players or teams, were unable to keep up with the speed of the game, made inconsistent calls, or took advantage of their ability to control the game.

The majority of players strongly expressed that they wanted to have the community more involved in attending the games. The players provided an impressive list of suggestions for how to get the community more involved:

- Provide news coverage of the league (some of the players mentioned this happened in past sessions and the majority of players would like to see it happen again).
- Provide activities for players’ children (and any children that attend the games) such as face painting and drawing. A lot of the players want to bring their children to the games but they indicated there is nothing for them to do while the players play.
- Encourage the players to invite their family and friends to the game each week. The young men stated that VBA staff do not encourage them to invite others to attend so it gets overlooked.
- Hold a Community Day where the players can showcase their talent. Players suggested the program utilize the All-Star game as a potential Community Day to publicize the league and increase community attendance.

“News coverage - we had the news down here one year - I was on the news and I was proud. They don't see the good in us and all they know is shootings so they would never get to know us cause they're so afraid.” – VBA Player

Other suggestions from the players involved starting a Junior VBA for the younger generation because they too are in need of a positive activity. Many of the young men liked the idea of a junior league and all focus group participants expressed interest in coaching the teams.

“Junior VBA league we've been talking about here for a long time... if we can do something like that it's about getting that next generation involved so that's what we're all about cause we're cool and just coming to have fun it's about getting that other generation involved cause they're the ones involved in the music videos and robbings and shootings.” – VBA Player

Community Perspective of VBA

According to the community, VBA is a result of the Omaha 360 intervention and prevention work groups. In previous years, the Omaha 360 group rallied significant support around VBA, but some community members admitted they do not currently make efforts to visibly support the program. Many of them identified they are busy with day-to-day activities operating their own nonprofits. One community member believed the VBA program should take primary responsibility to promote the league, specifically the players. Efforts to build community relationships by members of the Omaha 360 are continuing. For instance, the Omaha Police Department (OPD) maintain a consistent presence at the games. The OPD lieutenant sends members of the gang unit to the games with hopes of building and strengthening community relations, but admitted the officers often struggle to successfully participate in community engagement. Our program observations confirmed a lack of Omaha 360 involvement. The director of Omaha 360 and his colleague attended one of the games we observed to support the players.

“So VBA helps to address some of Omaha 360 collective strategies – specifically prevention and intervention.” – Community Leader

“VBA is being visible in and is growing and didn't die in these 6 years and is takin' on different characteristics and flavors 'cause it was community agency driven in the beginning but now it's more youth driven but it's doing its thing.” – Community Leader

Recommendations: Program Implementation

The strengths of program implementation are:

1. VBA staff consistently enforced Hope Skate rules and VBA rules to help control the players and attendees.
2. VBA staff implemented highly effective safety measures such as security guards, metal detectors, and checking bags to maintain the positive environment.

3. VBA staff were very friendly, attentive, and accommodating to players' and coaches' needs.
4. Post-evaluation and satisfaction surveys data collection methods were well organized.
5. After games ended, VBA staff prohibited loitering within the Hope Skate facility and parking lot which assisted with reducing the chance of violence. All attendees and participants quickly packed up and left the premises.

Based on the interview and focus group analyses and program observations, we make the following recommendations to strengthen implementation:

1. Create posters of VBA goals and display in each gym so they are visible during league games to help players learn the goals. Also, mention the goals at the start of each game and at other appropriate times throughout the session.
2. Hold a short meeting with the players before the start of each game to remind players of the VBA goals, introduce any new rules, make announcements, and discuss special guests, if any. Consider utilizing the prayer circle to hold these brief meetings.
3. Place VBA goals and rules in a handbook that is distributed to staff, coaches, and players.

Based on our program observations and data analyses, we recommend the following changes to address the barriers of VBA implementation:

1. Develop a new employee training protocol for consistent completion of job responsibilities.
2. Hire an additional part-time staff member and reassign the responsibilities of the current two staff members. If it is not possible to hire another part-time staff, we recommend devoting consistent and specified time each session for a Hope Center staff who has VBA work experience to assist with program implementation. The part-time staff will assist with coordinating and implementing VBA. The recommended reassigned roles can be as follows:

Recommended VBA Program Duties and Responsibilities

Staff member #1	Operate the scoreboard, document game statistics, maintain VBA website (e.g. update schedule, player statistics, pictures, announcements), email registration information to participating agencies, and other "housekeeping" items, report to commissioner on all activities.
Staff member #2	Commissioner of the league; promote league and games, crowd control, conduct conflict resolution when necessary, and implement VBA rules.
Staff member #3	Assist commissioner, assist with scoreboard or document game statistics, coordinate coaches meetings, plan and coordinate VBA activities (Community Day, All-Star game, halftime performances, etc.), report to commissioner on all activities.

Supporting staff	Referees, security personnel, and Hope Skate staff are also key contributors to program implementation.
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[†]Recommended new staff member

3. Develop a VBA rulebook that clearly communicates the rules of the league including registration, team guidelines, player and coach conduct, general officiating guidelines, and league format.
4. Build relationships between OPD and VBA:
 - a. Request OPD gang unit members attend the games in smaller numbers (in pairs) to minimize perceived intimidation.
 - b. Request OPD officers attend games in casual clothing, if possible.
 - c. Provide a brief training or one page of guidelines to assist officers with successful community engagement without discomfort and tension from the players. For instance, guidelines could include interacting with the players and attendees during timeouts and halftime; introducing themselves to players, children, and attendees; and commending the young men on their basketball skills.
5. Implement two of the players' suggestions:
 - a. Increase community involvement.
 - 1) Enhance league promotion and marketing. Marketing students in UNO's Communication Department could do this as a service learning activity. Students develop promotion and marketing materials for community-based organizations and programs at no cost to the community organization.
 - 2) Recruit local businesses to sponsor the league or league activities.
 - 3) Provide activities for children such as face painting and drawing.
 - b. Provide community resources.
 - 1) Invite representatives of community organizations to each game and give them opportunity to share through announcements, posters, or exhibits. We recommend a minimum of three organizations represented at each game.
6. Develop, implement, and evaluate the Junior VBA league and involve players from current or past VBA leagues.

While it did not come up in the data analyses of the process, program observations indicated that the league consisted of young men ages 21 and older whereas the program overview indicated the league targets youth. Consider revising the VBA goals to focus on the priority population: adults ages 21 and older.

Findings: Goal Achievement

Note: The goals in the program overview deviated slightly from the goals utilized in the VBA program session. We utilized the VBA goals from the program session to report the findings.

Our findings and recommendations are organized around VBA's goals.

Goal 1: Youth connect with youth-serving organizations*Observations*

During program observations, informal discussions with Hope Center staff revealed that community organizations set up tables of information about services provided during the games. At only one of the four observation days did we observe that a community organization was present to provide information to players. We noticed attendees of the games inquired about the services being offered demonstrating that it is not only an opportunity to connect youth, but also the community at large.

Qualitative

Individual interviews and focus group analyses revealed four common barriers to VBA implementation identified by community, staff, and players. One of the four barriers discussed was the lack of community involvement and attendance.

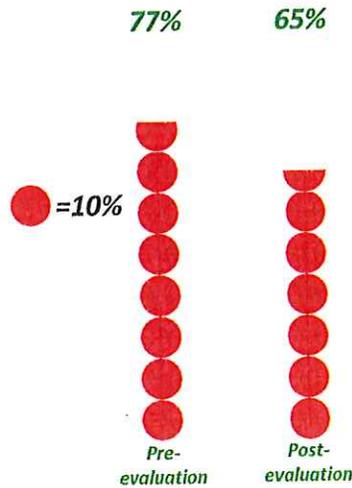
Players also believed the community involvement was necessary as evidenced by their suggestion to have more community organizations present at the games to promote services.

“Maybe they can have like a little stand and if we have job opportunities or volunteer opportunities or college stuff. It’s a lot of stuff that people don’t know they have access to unless it’s right in their face—we have stuff out there and they don’t know so we’re missing out” – VBA Player

Quantitative

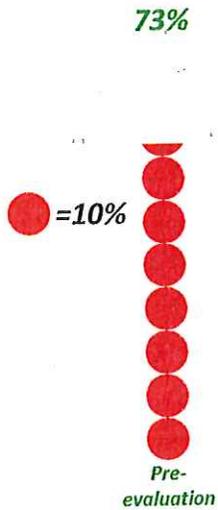
Players and coaches were asked about their contacts with other youth-serving community organizations in the evaluation survey. At the beginning of the VBA program, 77% (n=61) of players reported making contacts with other youth-serving organizations. At the end of the VBA program, only 65% (n=26) of players reported contacts with other youth-serving organizations.

Players Contact with Other Youth-Serving Organizations.



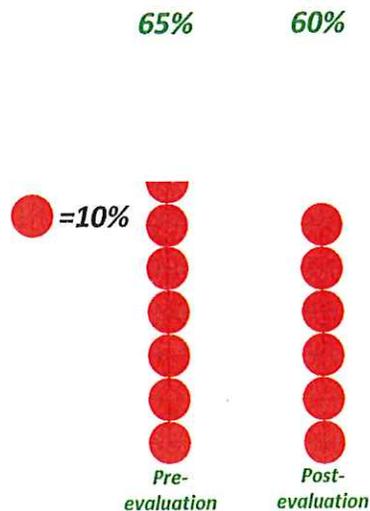
At pre-evaluation, approximately 73% (n=5) of coaches reported contact with youth-serving organizations while at post-evaluation 80% (n=4) of coaches reported contact with such organizations.

Coaches Contact with Youth-Serving Organizations.



Players were also asked about attending youth-serving organizations while participating in VBA. At pre-evaluation, 65% (n=51) of players reported attending youth-serving organizations, but at post-evaluation 60% (n=24) reported attending youth serving organizations showing a slight decrease.

Players Attending Youth-Serving Organizations.



Additionally, coaches were asked if VBA could do more to reach out to young people in the community. At pre-evaluation, 75% (n=6) of coaches believed VBA could do more whereas 100% of coaches believed VBA could do more at post-evaluation.

Recommendations

Overall, evidence suggests that VBA is facing challenges meeting Goal 1. We make the following recommendation based on the evidence and feedback from players, coaches, staff, and community:

1. Actively recruit community organizations to attend VBA game nights and distribute information to players, attendees, and coaches. Ask coaches representing community organizations to identify a contact person at their organization to attend and distribute information at the games. Players would like to receive information about current employment opportunities, school enrollment (academic, vocational, and trade), housing, community events, etc.
2. The VBA program's priority population is adults rather than youth. Begin a Junior VBA league to reach out to young people in the community.

Goal 2: Youth develop a sense of working with a team

Observations

During program observations, we observed teams working together for the common goal to win. There were examples of team camaraderie such as unique team handshakes, pats on the back, hugs, and verbal praise. When teammates made critical mistakes costing the team a foul or points, teammates did not tear each other down but they were forgiving and took the time to provide each other with advice to rectify the problem; team troubleshooting was present throughout all observations. Moreover, players from opposing teams would help each other up from a fall and provide praise on completing difficult plays to earn the opposing team points. It

was very clear that teams worked together and there was a strong sense of brotherhood. During the playoffs observation, a player was badly injured and was in significant pain. His teammates came together and supported him; they stopped the game to ensure that he was okay and received necessary medical attention. Even the opposing team was very concerned and offered assistance.

At times, profanity was used by players usually due to undesirable calls by referees. The coaches were not consistently visible at the games and did not consistently intervene when profanity was used. During intense plays, some players became very emotional and aggressive with their teammates and sometimes with players from the opposing team. In these instances, coaches intervened by calling a timeout or substituting a new player into the game. The coaches would either let the player sit the bench to calm down independently or take the time to speak to the player. In the latter example, the coach calmed down the player and utilize the situation as a teaching moment to discuss how the player can better handle himself during game play. In half of our program observations, we noted instances that coaches were not positive role models (e.g. poor interaction between coaches and players, coaches aggressively arguing with referees and scorekeepers, and coaches allowing players to curse on the court and at VBA staff).

Qualitative

The interviews and focus groups revealed positive players and coaches' relationships, positive relationships with other players, and coaches as positive role models leading to a greater sense of working with a team. In contrast, some of the players revealed coaches getting in physical altercations with players. Also, many of the staff mentioned that players excessively used profanity during game play. While some staff stated some profanity may be acceptable, most believed profanity use made staff and attendees uncomfortable during game play.

“There are going to be bad calls...and with the coaches too, you set the tone for the players so you have to handle yourself in ways that the players can see you as a good example. This is an opportunity to train the coaches about how to disagree appropriately.” – VBA Staff

In their interviews, most coaches indicated they had positive interactions with their players outside of VBA. For example, the coaches devoted time outside of VBA to develop and update a Facebook page for their team, call or text their players weekly, give advice about personal situations, help with day-to-day activities, and go out to eat together. The less active coaches typically interacted with their players by text message to alert them of game days and times. Many coaches desired interactions with their players outside of VBA. Coaches suggested ways VBA could assist with better interaction:

1. Recruit local business such as restaurants to sponsor the league and offer group discounts to make outings more affordable for coaches. Many coaches mentioned they were absorbing the costs of interacting with their players outside of VBA.
2. Create a Family Night for the players to bring their families to the games, build rapport between coaches and players, and increase community involvement in the league.

3. Document coaches' meetings especially for coaches unable to attend. For instance, provide meeting minutes or a newsletter with the updates so all coaches are informed and can better interact with their players during games.
4. Hold coaches' meeting throughout the session to assist with league adjustments, improvements, and address challenges.

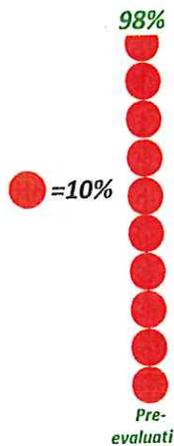
"When you're working with these kids you can't have one foot in and one foot out. If you want to have that relationship, it's kind of like a full time relationship. The relationship is real/authentic and if there's a problem, I'm accessible mostly anytime. You can't "fake the funk with them" and you have to have a relationship outside of VBA. It can't just be VBA hours." – VBA Coach

Quantitative

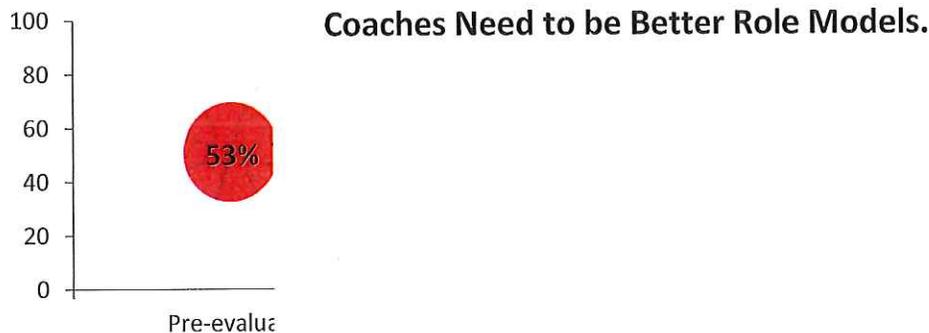
We analyzed the players' and coaches' responses on three survey items to better understand players' sense of working with a team: positive role models, pride in playing for their team, and anticipating VBA each week.

One survey item asked players about VBA coaches being positive role models. At pre-evaluation, the majority of players, 98% (n=76), agreed that VBA coaches are positive role models. At post-evaluation, a majority of players also agreed (88%) VBA coaches are positive role models.

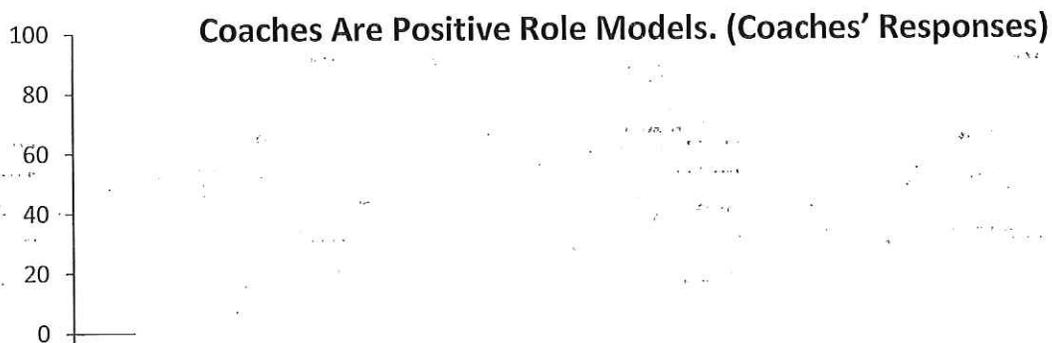
Coaches Are Positive Role Models. (Players' Responses)



When players were asked if coaches needed to be better role models, interestingly, 53% (n=39) agreed they needed to be better role models at the beginning of VBA while 65% (n=26) agreed at the end of the VBA program. This is an increase from pre-evaluation.



Coaches were also asked about being positive role models. At pre- and post-evaluation, 100% (n=8) of coaches believed they were positive role models and credited their participation in VBA as helping them to be better role models. Interestingly, at the beginning of VBA, 63% (n=5) of coaches reported that coaches needed to be better role models. At the end of VBA, only 20% (n=1) agreed that coaches needed to be better role models.



We identified some discrepancy between players' and coaches' perspectives regarding the caliber of coaches being role models.

Players were asked about pride in playing for their team. At pre- and post-evaluation, the majority of players reported they had a sense of pride playing for their team (96% and 93%, respectively).

Players were also asked about their anticipation playing in VBA games each week. At pre- and post-evaluation, the majority of players reported they anticipated playing in VBA each week (95% and 90%, respectively).

Recommendations

Overall, the VBA program is meeting Goal 2. We evidenced that players had positive relationships with other players, took pride in their teams, and enjoyed participating in VBA each week. It was also evident to us that some areas could be strengthened to better address Goal 2. Most players (and all coaches) agreed that the VBA coaches are positive role models, but the majority of players also agreed that coaches could be better role models. We recommend:

1. Continue reinforcing positive relationships between staff, coaches, and players.
2. Provide a brief mentoring training to coaches in an online asynchronous format, or at coaches' meetings to assist with perpetuating positive male role models. The training could be used as a requirement that must be fulfilled before becoming a VBA coach.
3. Develop a set of behavior conduct guidelines for the players. We understand these rules are currently unwritten but if the players are held accountable for their actions, this will increase adherence to the behavior guidelines.

Goal 3: Youth will build pride in the community

Observations

Players, coaches, and staff had positive interactions with each other in the majority of our observations. Staff interactions with players was always positive; players joked with staff and vice versa; staff smiled, laughed, and showed gestures of care (e.g. handshake, pat on the back, hug) during interactions with players. In addition, players positively interacted with their coaches. Some players displayed brother-like or father-like relationships with their coaches. During one observation, a player and coach were having a serious conversation, and it was obvious the interaction was positive and helped the player to reach a solution to his problem. This display of care between players, coaches, and staff helped to build positivity in the individuals in the community, in turn, increasing pride for the community as a whole.

Qualitative

Through building relationships with players and coaches, players have positive relationships with other players and find positive role models in their coaches leading to a sense of pride in their community. Interestingly, the staff and players did not see pride in the community as a goal of VBA but rather a benefit.

“There’s a sense of pride with learning healthy competition, sportsmanship, following directions, may not be displayed all the time but it’s a learning opportunity.” -VBA Staff

Quantitative

Players were asked two survey questions about building pride in their community. First players were asked whether VBA helps build pride in the community. At pre-evaluation survey, 96% (n=71) of players reported VBA helps them build pride in their community. At post-evaluation, the majority of players, 93% (n=37) continued to report VBA helps them build community pride.

Second, players were asked if VBA changed the way they see their community. At pre-evaluation, 91% (n=67) of players reported VBA changed the way they saw their community. At post-evaluation, the majority of players, 90% (n=36) continued to agree that VBA changed the way they saw their community.

Coaches were also asked if VBA helped build pride in their community. At pre- and post-evaluation, 100% (n=8) of coaches reported VBA helped build pride in the community and changed the way they saw their community.

Recommendations

The VBA program is undoubtedly meeting Goal 3. Most of the players, and all of the coaches, agreed that VBA helps to build pride in the community and has changed the way players and coaches see their community. Community pride was reportedly built through the relationship building at VBA. It was pleasantly evident that the VBA staff and coaches cared about the players by their interactions thus reinforcing community pride.

We recommend encouraging staff and coaches to continue having positive interactions with players. It is evident the interactions are highly associated with building pride in the community and changing the perspective of the community.

Goal 4: Youth will have a safe place to play basketball

Observations

During all observations, it was very evident to us that the Hope Center staff took safety for VBA players, staff, coaches, and attendees very seriously. When anyone walked in the front entrance, they were immediately greeted by a Hope Center staff member. The person would walk through a metal detector. Whether the metal detector is alarmed or not, the Hope Center staff member waved a "wand" across the person's body to detect metals (e.g., guns, knives). Then, the staff member thoroughly checked all bags and belongings for weapons or objects that could be considered weapons. Once cleared, the person was allowed to enter the Hope Skate Center.

In addition to the metal detectors and bag checks, security was present weekly and throughout the games. The security was provided by an outside security firm during the first two observations and then switched to the Sheriff's Department for the remaining observations. Security was present to mediate potential altercations and enforce facility rules. During our observations, there were no altercations.

The OPD was also present but in a supportive role. Members of the OPD gang unit attended the games to show support for the teams. At times, it did not seem like they were there to be supportive as they did not interact with players or attendees. Occasionally, the officers would interact with VBA staff, but the majority of the time, the officers congregated amongst themselves with very little to no interaction with anyone outside of the other officers present.

Qualitative

Overall, the majority of the players stated that they felt safe because of the VBA security measures (security guards, metal detector, and bag checks). An important finding from the interviews and focus groups was the differing views of OPD's presence at the games. Most of the staff and coaches felt their presence was positive and helping to rebuild and strengthen relationships with the community. Interestingly, the players expressed discomfort, tension, and a lack of safety when the gang unit was present. A few of the players understood the gang unit was present to build community relationships, but many of them believed that their presence did not

convey community building, but was to intimidate and prey on the young men during and after games. Some players believed the intentions may be good from the OPD lieutenant, but when the gang unit officers were present, they disregard the lieutenant's intentions and "do what they want" typically resulting in harassment and intimidation. The players preferred the gang unit did not attend the games unless they are out of uniform and positively interacting with players and attendees.

"There are security there and the metal detectors like that you might it lets people know that harmful things aren't allowed" – VBA Staff

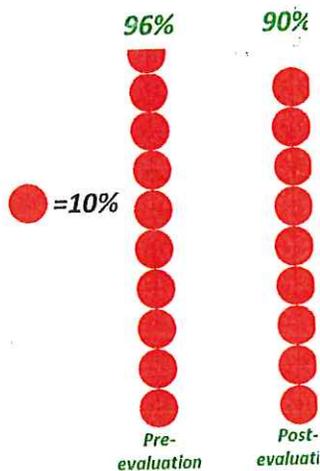
"That [the gang unit's actions] made me feel uncomfortable because this is a place where I'm supposed to be safe at" – VBA Staff

Quantitative

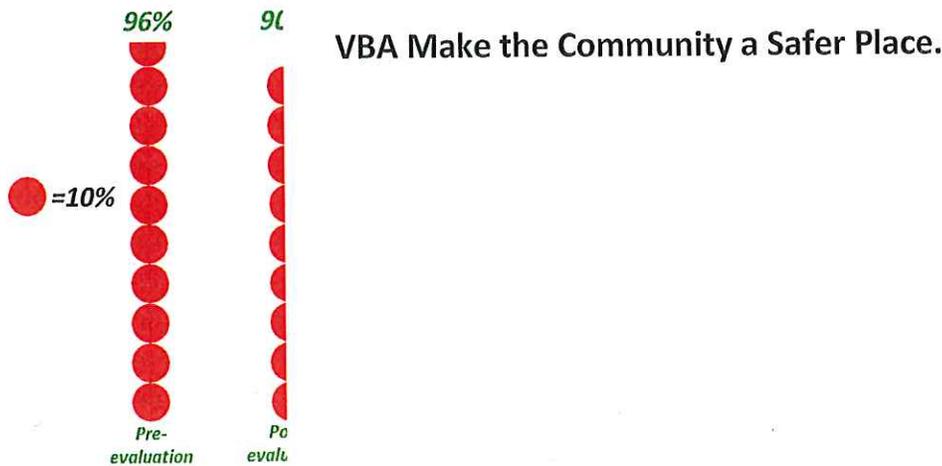
Survey items asked players and coaches about safety while participating in VBA. Specifically, they were asked about VBA being a safe community activity, VBA making the community a safer place, and less violence in the community because of VBA.

At pre-evaluation, 96% (n=76) of players reported VBA is a safe community activity. This percentage remained high at post-evaluation with 90% (n=32) of players reporting VBA is a safe community activity.

VBA is a Safe Community Activity.

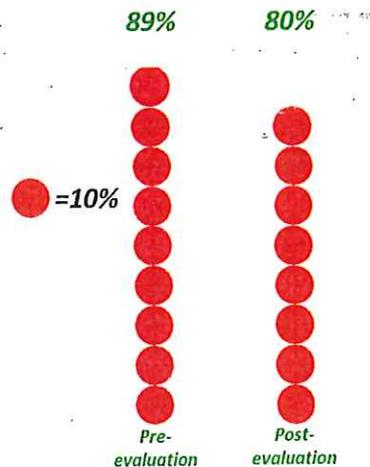


Players were also asked if VBA makes the community a safer place. At pre-evaluation, 96% (71) of players agreed with this statement. At post-evaluation, the percentage continued to be high with 90% (n=36) of players agreeing.



At pre-evaluation, 89% (n=66) of players agreed there was less violence in the community because of VBA. At post-evaluation, only 80% (n=32) of players agreed with this statement.

There is Less Violence in the Community Because of VBA. (Players' Response)

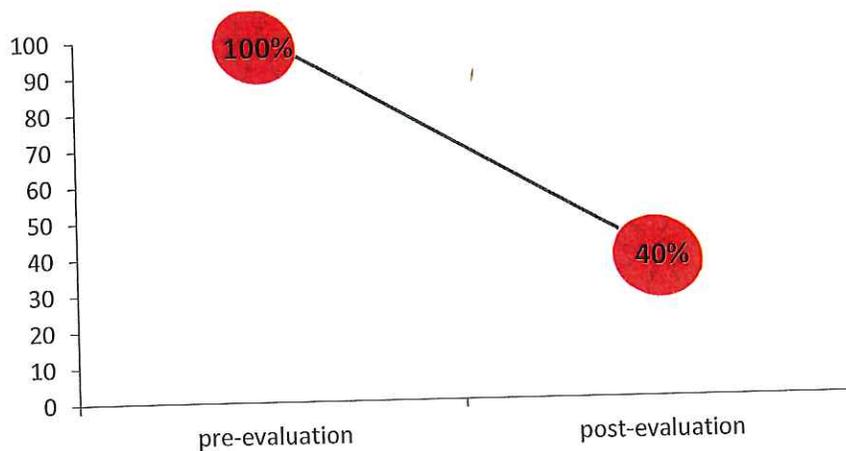


Coaches were asked to respond to the same three statements. For “VBA being a safe community activity,” 75% (n=6) of coaches agreed with this statement pre-evaluation while 100% of coaches (n=6) agreed with this statement at post-evaluation.

For the statement, “VBA makes the community a safer place,” all coaches at pre- and post-evaluation agreed that VBA indeed makes the community a safer place.

Interestingly, coaches responded differently than players to VBA’s influence on violence in the community. At pre-evaluation, all coaches agreed there was less violence in the community because of VBA. At post-evaluation, only 40% (n=2) of coaches agreed with this statement.

There is Less Violence in the Community Because of VBA. (Coaches' Response)



Recommendations

Overall, players, coaches, and staff felt the VBA program provides a safe environment for games, thus achieving Goal 4. The majority of the players and coaches agreed the VBA program is a safe community activity and makes the community a safer place. Players and coaches did not agree regarding the reduction in violence because of the VBA program. While most players agreed there was less violence in the community because of VBA, less than half of the coaches agreed with this statement. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Continue to provide the high level of security with the use of metal detectors, wands, bag checking, and outside security firm to patrol the games. These acts made staff, players, and coaches feel safe.
2. Review the presence of OPD's gang unit at the games. Their presence makes the players feel unsafe and does not seem to be conducive to relationship building or strengthening. Request the officers attend games in casual clothing, and encourage them to increase their positive interactions with players, attendees, and staff.

Limitations

Despite the best efforts of programs and evaluators, all evaluations have limitations that must be considered alongside the findings and recommendations. A critical limitation to the quantitative data analysis was the pre and post-evaluation outcome measurement tool. The tool is a non-validated measure developed by Hope Center staff. Many of the research questions from the Hope Center program coordinator and director could not be answered because the data collected was unreliable and did not appear to be measure VBA's goals.

Another limitation to the quantitative data analysis was the data collection process. At pre-evaluation, 81 surveys were collected from players and 8 from coaches. At post-evaluation, only 41 surveys were collected from players and 6 from coaches. The low response rate at post-evaluation from players proved to significantly limit bivariate data analyses. In addition, the surveys were unmatched at pre-post, and therefore, we were unable to perform more

sophisticated data analyses to show program impact. We were only able to provide descriptive summaries of the data.

Recommendations

To address the limitations above, we strongly recommend the following:

1. Find and administer a validated outcome measurement tool(s) to accurately measure the VBA goals. Validated tools are more credible and reliable than homegrown measurement tools because they are well-written items and provides ability to compare outcomes to programs with similar goals.
2. Match the pre and post-evaluation surveys to allow for more sophisticated data analyses of program outcomes to better show program impact. For example, give each player a unique identification (ID) number at the beginning of VBA. Keep a record of the identification numbers in a secure database. Write the ID number on the top or bottom of the pre and post-evaluation surveys. When the evaluation surveys are administered, a VBA staff will administer the surveys to the appropriate player according to ID number. At post-evaluation a VBA staff will repeat the pre-evaluation administration process to match the surveys for each player. This will ensure players can be tracked from beginning to the end of the program.
3. Develop a more systematic data collection implementation plan to improve the response rate on pre and post-evaluation surveys for more accurate and rigorous data analyses.
 - a. Continue implementing the data entry process with the database template we developed, noting that the template questions will change when a new measurement tool is administered.
 - b. Write the steps for data entry to prevent entry errors and assist training new staff on data entry.
4. Complete an outcome evaluation after steps are taken to improve the program implementation. The outcome evaluation can provide an opportunity to measure program effects by assessing the progress in outcomes or outcome objectives the program is to achieve.

Appendix A**Interview Questions****INDIVIDUAL****Staff & Referee Interviews:**

1. What are the goals of VBA?
 - a. How are these goals being met?
 - i. If you believe the goals are not being met, why not?
2. What are the positive impacts of VBA on the players?
 - a. What about the positive impacts on the community?
3. What are the challenges/potential challenges of implementing VBA?
4. What changes would you like to see done to improve VBA?
5. How do you envision the VBA program 2 years from now?
6. What are some of the changes that were made to VBA over the years?
 - a. Did you agree with these changes? Why or why not?

Coach Interviews:

1. What are the goals of VBA?
 - a. How are these goals being met?
 - i. If you believe the goals are not being met, why not?
2. What are the positive impacts of VBA on the players?
 - a. What about the positive impacts on the community?
3. What are the challenges/potential challenges of implementing VBA?
4. What changes would you like to see done to improve VBA?
5. Describe the interactions with your players outside of VBA.
6. How effective do you think the referees are during games?
7. How could the league commissioners or Hope Center staff better support you as a VBA coach?
8. How do you envision the VBA program 2 years from now?

Community Leader Interviews:

1. What are the goals of VBA?
 - a. How are these goals being met?
 - i. If you believe the goals are not being met, why not?
2. What are the positive impacts of VBA on the players?
 - a. What about the positive impacts on the community?
3. What are the challenges/potential challenges of implementing VBA?
4. What changes would you like to see done to improve VBA?
5. What role does VBA play in your current intervention work?
6. How do you think VBA could have a greater impact in the community?
7. How do you envision the VBA program 2 years from now?

GROUPS

Ground rules – “The conversation will take 60-90 minutes. We ask that you do not share the information shared in this group. Of course we can’t enforce this but hope that you all will respect the privacy and not discuss the contents of this group outside the room. Also, we would like to record the session. The recording will only be reviewed by me to capture key themes that I may miss during the conversation today. Once I have reviewed and captured the themes, I will delete the recording. Lastly, but most importantly, your names or organizational affiliations will not be linked to your responses. No VBA coaches or staff will know what you say directly but instead your responds will be compiled into one overall response. Again, we will not link your responses to your name but will keep all responses anonymous when reporting back to Hope Center.”

Players (2 groups):

Introductions: First name, team, and which organization your team is associated with?

1. What are the goals of VBA?
 - a. How are these goals being met?
 - i. If you believe the goals are not being met, why not?
2. How does VBA provide a safe environment for you?
 - a. If you feel VBA does not provide a safe environment, what safety concerns do you have?
 - i. What would you like to see the VBA staff do to address your safety concerns?
3. What changes would you like to would you like to see to improve VBA?
 - a. How could VBA provide you with more community resources?
 - b. What are possible ways to increase friends and family attendance?
4. Describe the interaction you have with your coaches outside of VBA.
5. How effective do you think referees are during the games?
6. Why do you think police are present at VBA?
 - a. How do you feel when police are present?

Community Leaders (1 group):

Introduction: First name and organizational affiliation

1. What has your involvement been with VBA?
2. What are the goals of VBA?
 - a. How are these goals being met?
 - i. If you believe the goals are not being met, why not?
3. What is being said about VBA at the community level?
4. How can we improve the visibility of VBA in the community?
 - a. How can we improve the community support of VBA? Meaning, how do we get more non-profits, small business, local residents, etc. involved in VBA?
5. What role does VBA play in your current intervention work?
6. How do you envision the VBA program 2 years from now?

VBA Goals:

1. Youth will connect with youth-serving organizations.



3. Youth will build pride in community.

2. Youth develop a sense of working with a team.

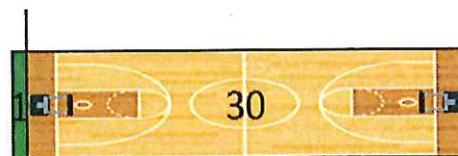
4. Youth will have a safe place to play basketball.



Do players feel safe?



I FEEL SAFE WHILE PARTICIPATING AT VBA.



IF I HAVE A CONCERN, I FEEL COMFORTABLE SPEAKING WITH VBA STAFF ABOUT IT.



■ disagree ■ agree



How do players feel about the Omaha Police Department at VBA?



"The security thing is fine but I'mma be honest I feel like sometimes when the gang unit is down here they use it as an opportunity to prey on us." - VBA Player



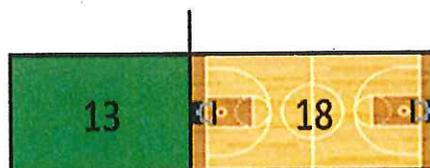
"That [the gang unit's actions] made me feel uncomfortable because this is a place where I'm supposed to be safe at." - VBA Player



How do players rate the referees?



I FEEL THAT, OVERALL, THE REFEREES CALL A FAIR GAME.



■ disagree ■ agree



What did you like best about VBA?

What did you like the least about VBA?

What would you like to see changed in VBA next season?



Positive Interactions



Referees



New/Better Refing



Good competition



Nothing



No Changes



Positive Activity



Arguing



More/better teams

What do players recommend to improve VBA?

"Maybe they can have like a little stand and if we have job opportunities or volunteer opportunities or college stuff. It's a lot of stuff that people don't know they have access to unless its right in their face-we have stuff out there and they don't know so we're missing out." – VBA Player

News Coverage

Community Day

Activities for Kids

Junior VBA

Invite Family & Friends

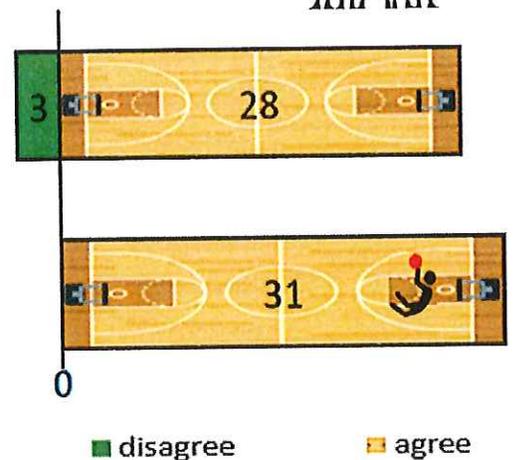


What do players think about team work?



I HAVE POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER PLAYERS.

I FEEL A SENSE OF BELONGING AT VBA.

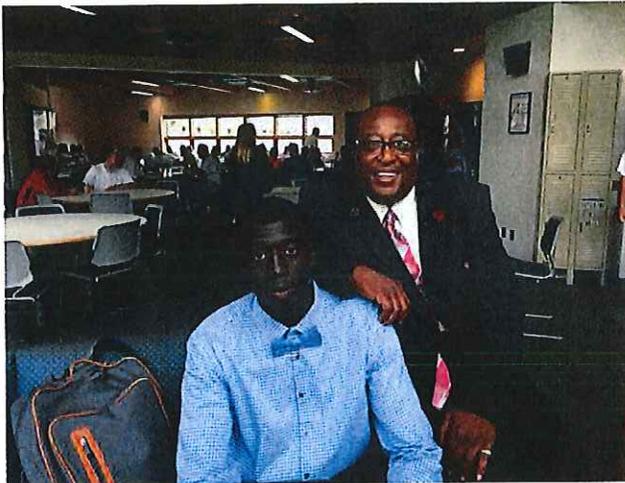


2015 - 2015 Black Men United Intro to the Trades and Soft Skills Program Evaluation

Overview

In 2015 Black Men United was awarded an \$81,000 grant from the Nebraska Office of Violence Prevention to conduct a violence prevention class by providing training and support to key targeted demographics in Omaha. This first year pilot led to the direct training of 35 students, all currently incarcerated or ex-felons and 10 other ex-felons were provided support but did not participate in training. Of the 45 total individuals served 13 were unincarcerated and of those 13, nine were connected to employment opportunities and 4 of those were connected to additional training or education. In total five classes were held and 208 one on one hours of support were provided.

The first course was held at Black Men United's facility. The final four courses of the year were held inside the Nebraska Youth Correctional Facility (NCYF). NCYF is a supermax state penitentiary that houses youth convicted as adults for felony offenses. This allowed Black Men United to more directly focus on the demographic group most likely to commit violent offenses in the community. The partnership with NCYF allowed Black Men United to develop relationships with the young inmates and become a trusted provider of support upon release. Additionally, Black Men United has secured agreements with local construction companies to hire four students from each class upon their release.



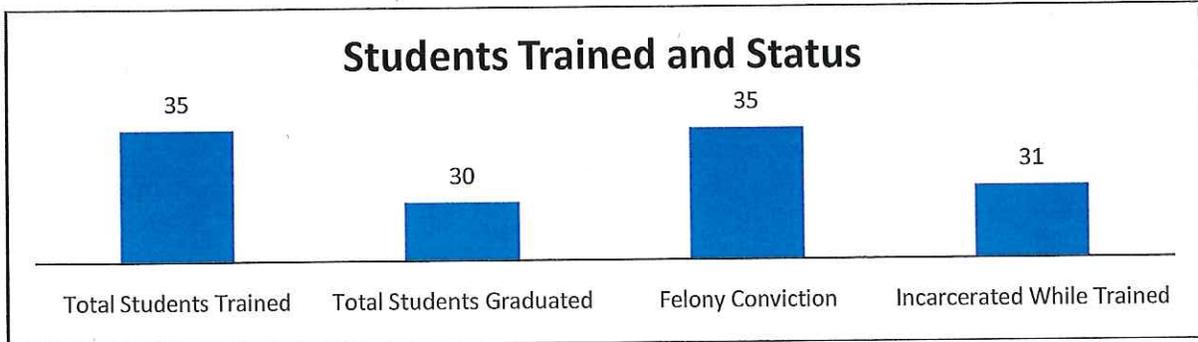
One of the greatest success stories to date for Black Men United is Nhal Wool. Wool was a graduate of class three and released to work release in May 2016.

Upon release he contacted Willie Hamilton, Black Men United President for support. Willie helped him get his birth certificate, his state ID, provided him with transportation and arranged for him to get a construction job and the necessary supplies within three weeks of his release.

Wool is now a union apprentice working with a union contracting company and makes \$14.00 with benefits. In addition, Wool was a minor when convicted as an adult for six armed robberies. Because of Wool's hard work while incarcerated as well as completing Black Men United's class and Willie's testimony at his pardon hearing, Wool was able to be paroled and restart his life.

Intro to the Trades Course Data

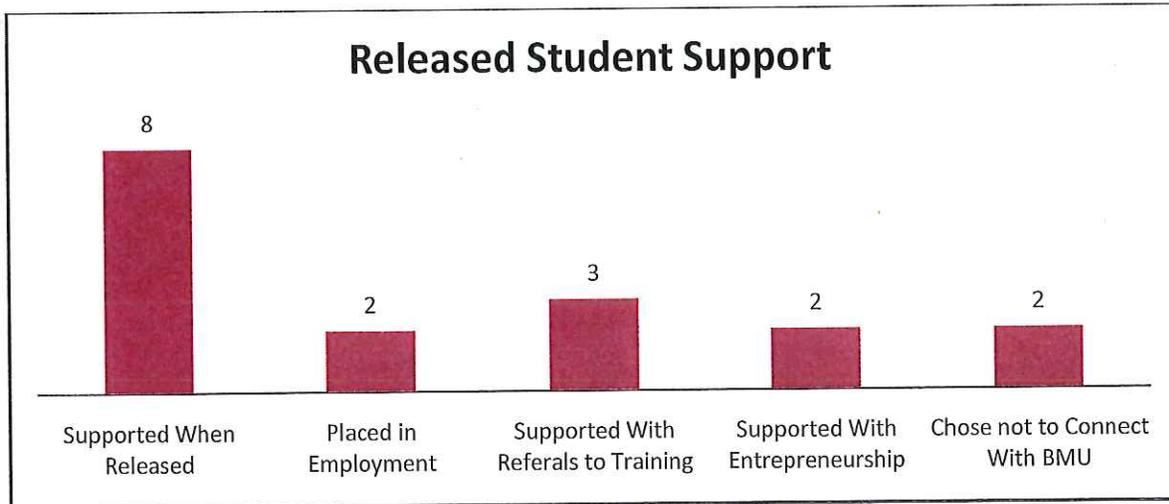
Students Trained and Student Status



Of the 35 students trained, 30 students completed the entire four week course including acquiring a CPR certification and receiving a certificate from Black Men United. All 35 students were either current felons serving time or ex-felons. 31 students were provided training behind bars and four students were training in Black Men United facilities.

Of the five students that did not graduate, two students ceased coming due to lack of interest, two students ceased coming due to discipline in the correction systems and one student was released to work release.

Students Served Upon Release

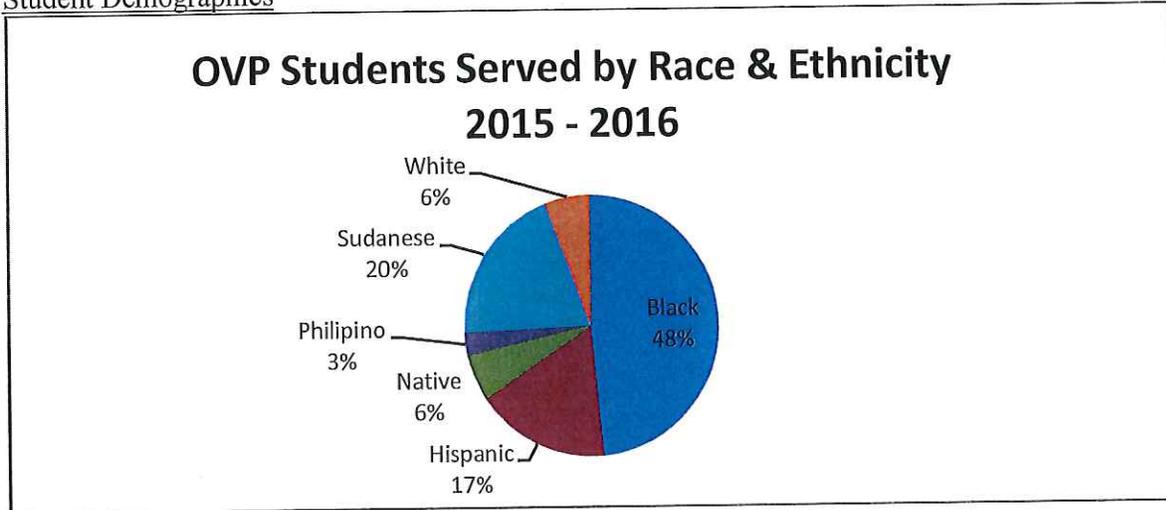


Of the total students that went through the course, eight students at some point during the grant year were either un-incarcerated or released from incarceration. Of these eight students two were placed into jobs in construction and trades, three were provided support in acquiring additional training, two were supported with entrepreneurship counseling and two students chose not to connect with Black Men United upon release.

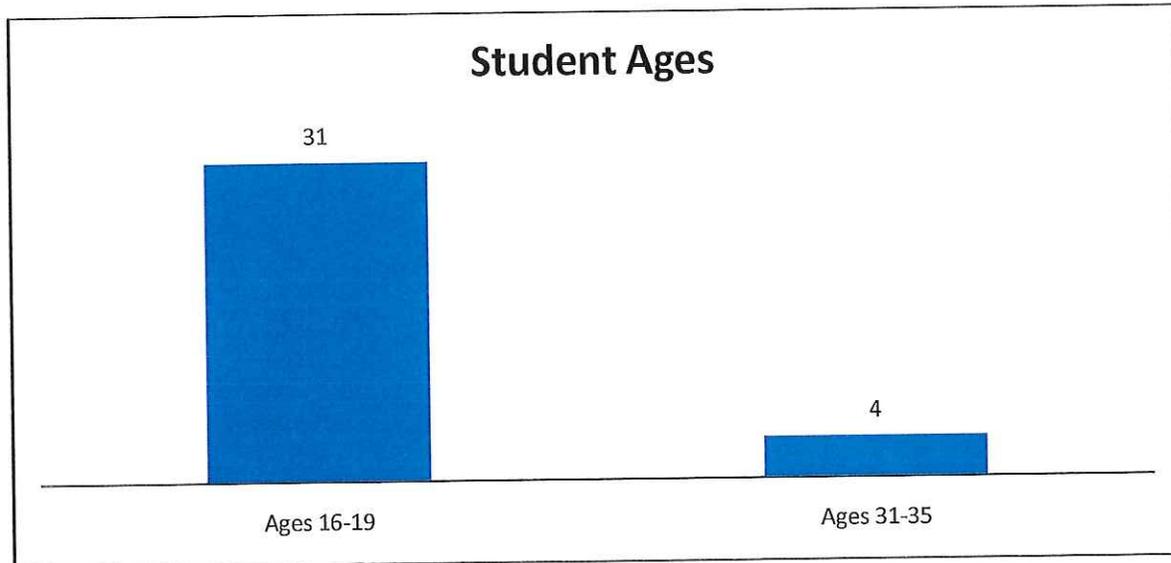
To One on One Support Hours

Black Men United provided 208 total support hours to individuals from 2015 to 2016. This included both students that participated in the program and those that did not.

Student Demographics



Of the 34 students trained 48% were Black. The second largest demographic group trained was Sudanese at 20%. The Sudanese population at the correctional center is becoming one of the largest demographic groups of young men incarcerated.



Thirty-one out of 34 students were age 16-19 a targeted demographic for violence reduction in Omaha.

Non-Student Support

Black Men United supported an additional 10 ex-felons that did not participate in the course. Of these ten individuals Black Men United helped eight of them get placed with a job and two of them with training programs.

Program Strengths, Weaknesses

Strengths

This program worked exceptionally well when conducted inside the Nebraska Department of Corrections. The course received strong praise from both NCYF administration and also among the students. Word of mouth quickly spread among inmates making it a high demand class for the institutions. There were five identified strengths:

1. The dual teaching of the course. Both the program instructor and Willie Hamilton, Black Men United President were present in close to 100% of all the class sessions. This approach allowed the students to learn from two different teaching styles and individuals from different backgrounds. Because of this the learning environment was enhanced.
2. Relationship building. Both the program instructor and President routinely ate lunch with the incarcerated students and worked very hard to develop relationships with the young men in the program. This led to a level of openness and interaction during the courses which enhanced the learning environment and provided opportunity for meaningful education. In addition, this led individuals to refer the course to their peers.
3. Final week panels. The last day of class in the course provides an opportunity for individuals from the community who have had legal troubles or issues and become successful to share their story. This class traditionally has been one of the most powerful classes for the young men who offer up a wide variety of constructive questions to the panelist.
4. Post-class support. Because the course is short, the instructors focus on encouraging students to reach out to Black Men United after they are released. Upon release, those that wish for Black Men United support are provided direct one on one support to help find resources and job opportunities.
5. Employer support. Black Men United has received a guarantee that four graduates from every course will be employed by contractors that work with the laborers union. In addition, non-union contractors from the North Omaha community have also agreed to hire any graduate that is highly motivated and willing to work.

Weaknesses

1. Staff capacity. Black Men United's ability to help place ex-felons into jobs and additional training opportunities became greater than staff capacity as the year went on. As more individuals were released from incarceration and word of mouth spread across the community more individuals reached out to Black Men United for support. Willie Hamilton is the only staff member of Black Men United with the capacity to support individuals during the regular working hours. The demand for his support has stretched his ability to run the other programs for

Black Men United. To offset this, Black Men United has been working with local philanthropist to acquire funding to hire a reentry coordinator position.

2. Community demand. There has been significant demand from the community to run more classes than Black Men United currently has both resources and time to conduct. Additional grant funding is also being sought to expand this class and also the 140 hour program that Black Men United has designed.

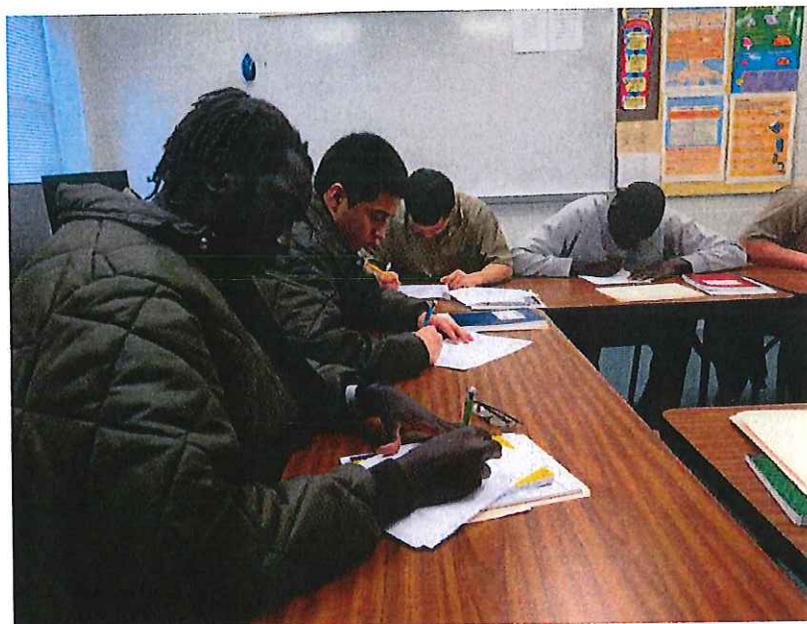
3. Staying Connected with inmates. One of the biggest weaknesses from the pilot year was being able to stay connected with incarcerated graduates of the program. Because all of the students are released on staggered dates, students that graduate months prior to release often become disconnected from Black Men United. This leads to some of those released to not utilize the support that Black Men United offers upon release. To offset this problem Black Men United will be offering quarterly "alumni" classes to graduate students. In addition, NCYF has agreed to provide a list to Black Men United of the release date for all graduates. This will allow the organization to reach out to graduates immediately prior to their release.

Conclusion

Overall the program was a success when evaluated from the standpoint of providing education, training and being able to secure jobs for individuals in the targeted demographic of the OVP grant. As the capacity of Black Men United continues to grow, the relationships with both the students and the Nebraska Department of Corrections continues to develop and the connection with employers, funders and the community increase better outcomes for both the students and the City of Omaha will occur.

Black Men United appreciates the opportunity to execute this program with the support of the Office of Violence Prevention.

Pictures



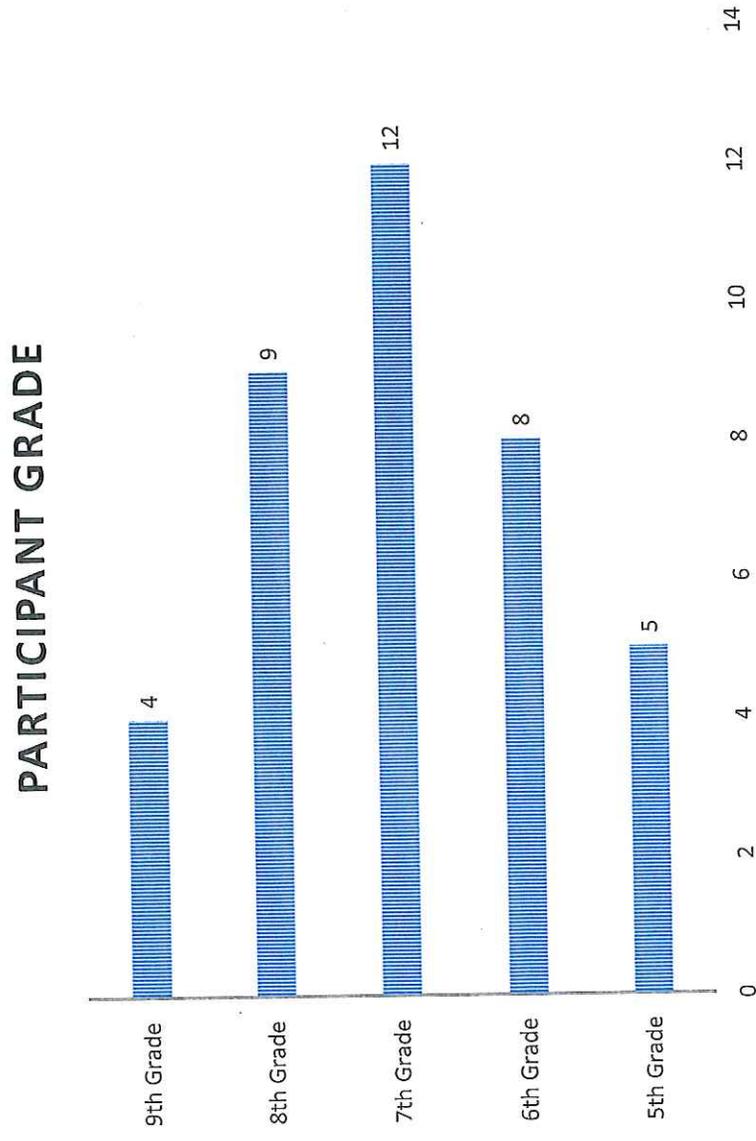


NorthStar Quarterly Survey

Results: Time 1

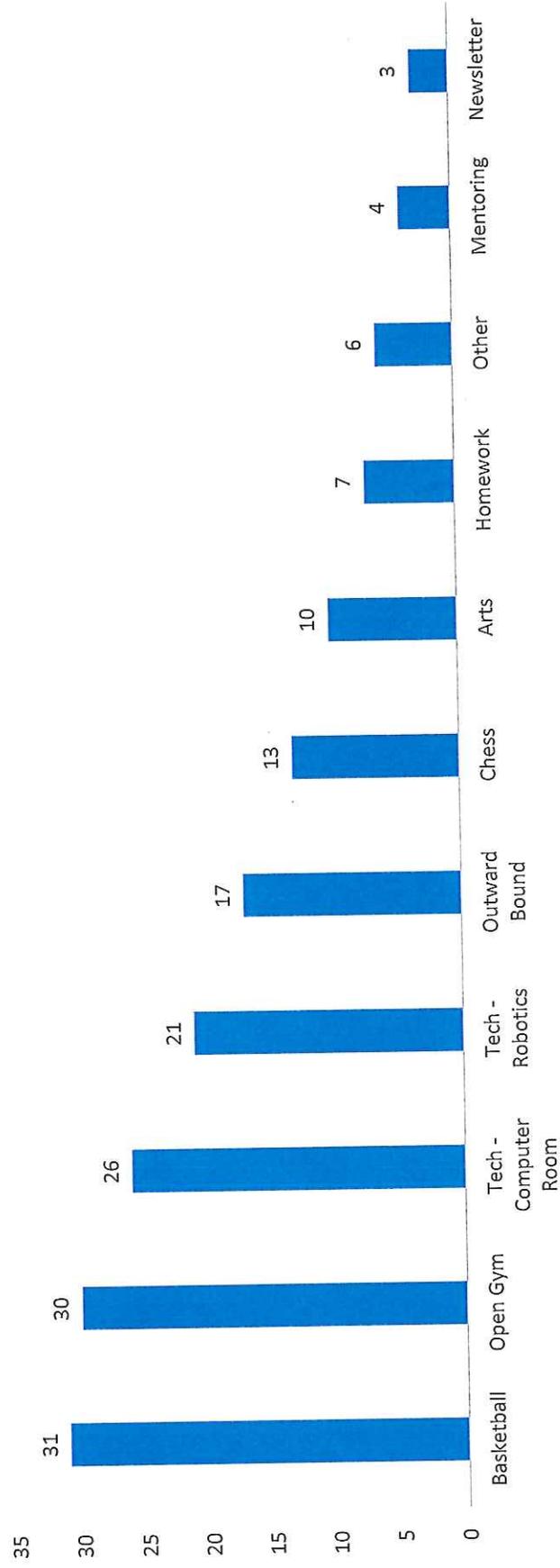
Quarterly Survey Results

- Total valid responses = 38 (of 41)
 - 25 Mobile internet access
 - 34 have internet at home
 - Average Age: 12.8 years
 - Most will participate in NS Summer Program (34)
- Students responding to the survey had an average attendance of **90 days**.

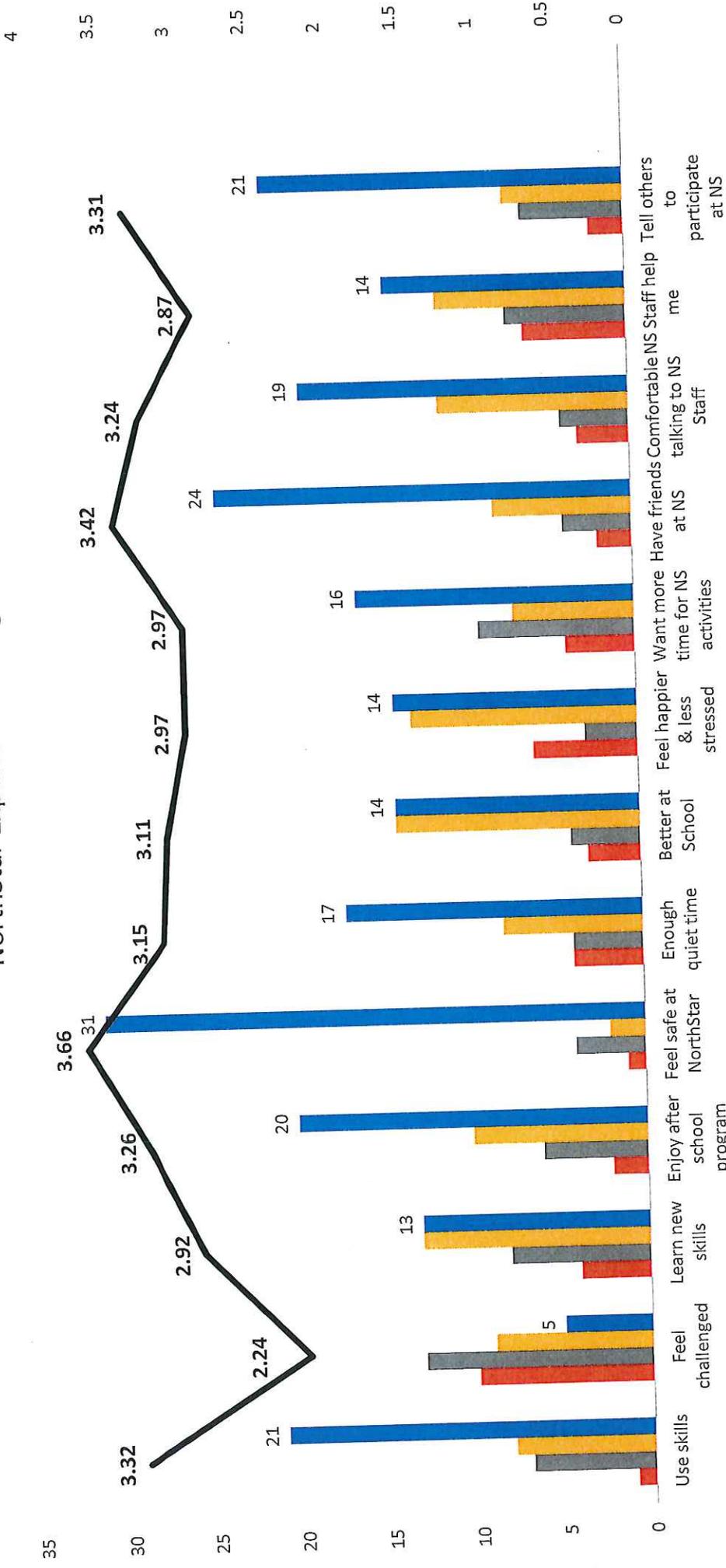


NorthStar Experience

NorthStar Program Attendance



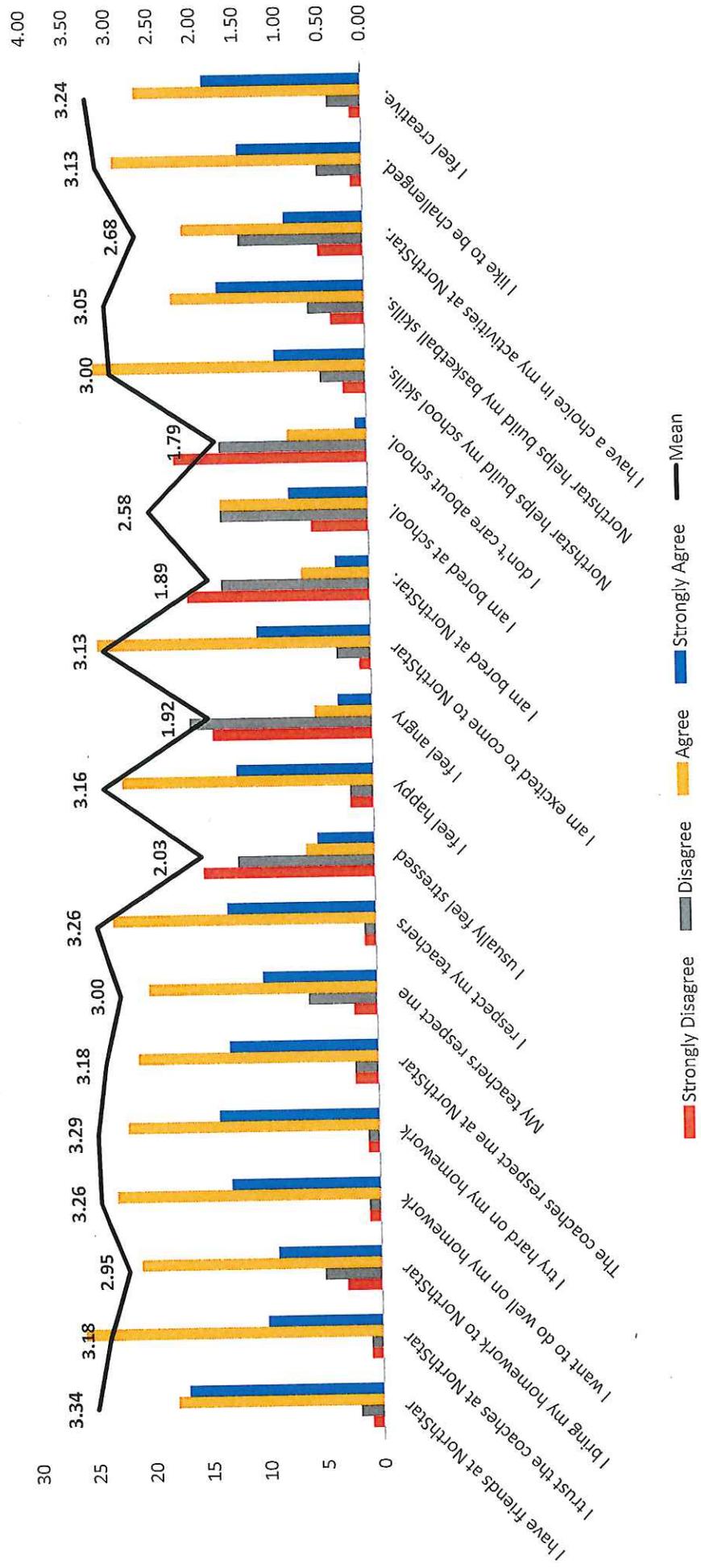
NorthStar Experience Rating



NorthStar Experience

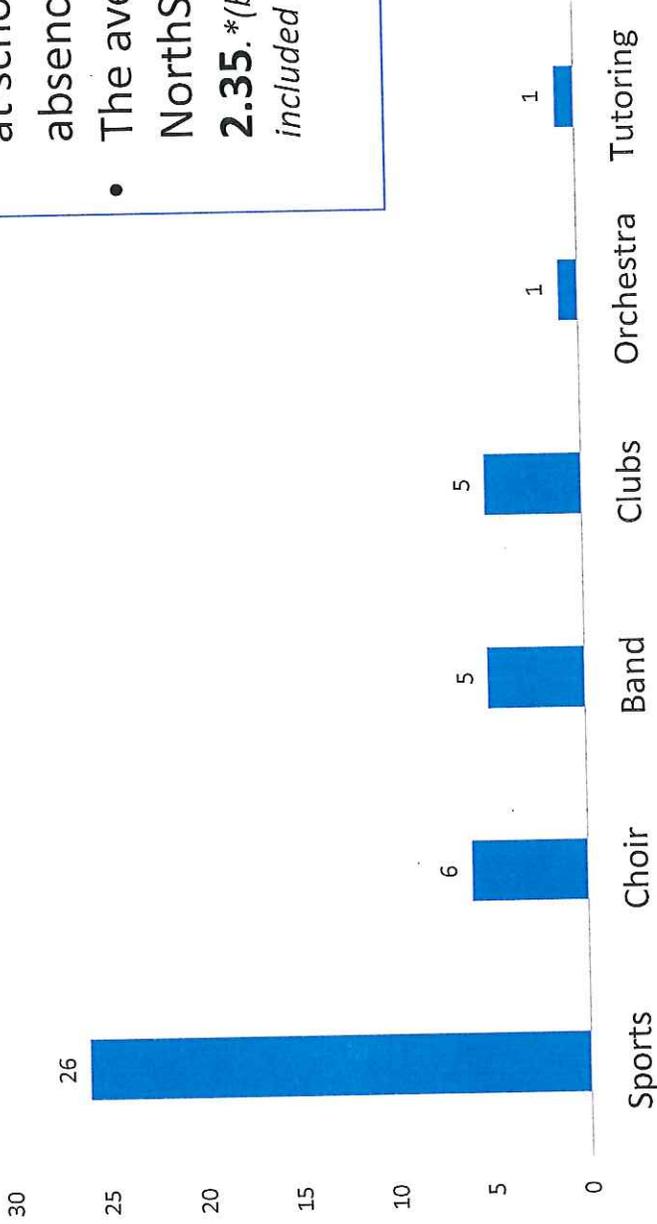
- 12 Students say their favorite part of NorthStar is open gym & sports.
- 11 Students say their favorite part of NorthStar is playing basketball.
- 10 Students say their favorite part of NorthStar is tech / computer time.
- **60%** of respondents indicated that they **want to attend** NS programs everyday.
- When asked what would make NorthStar even better, students said:
 - Add a swimming pool
 - More tech time
 - More basketball
 - More gym time
 - More art
 - More sports (weight room, soccer, dodgeball, fitness program)
 - Better food
 - Other suggestions included student mentoring, more girls, fundraiser for veterans, and video time.

NorthStar Experience: Engagement



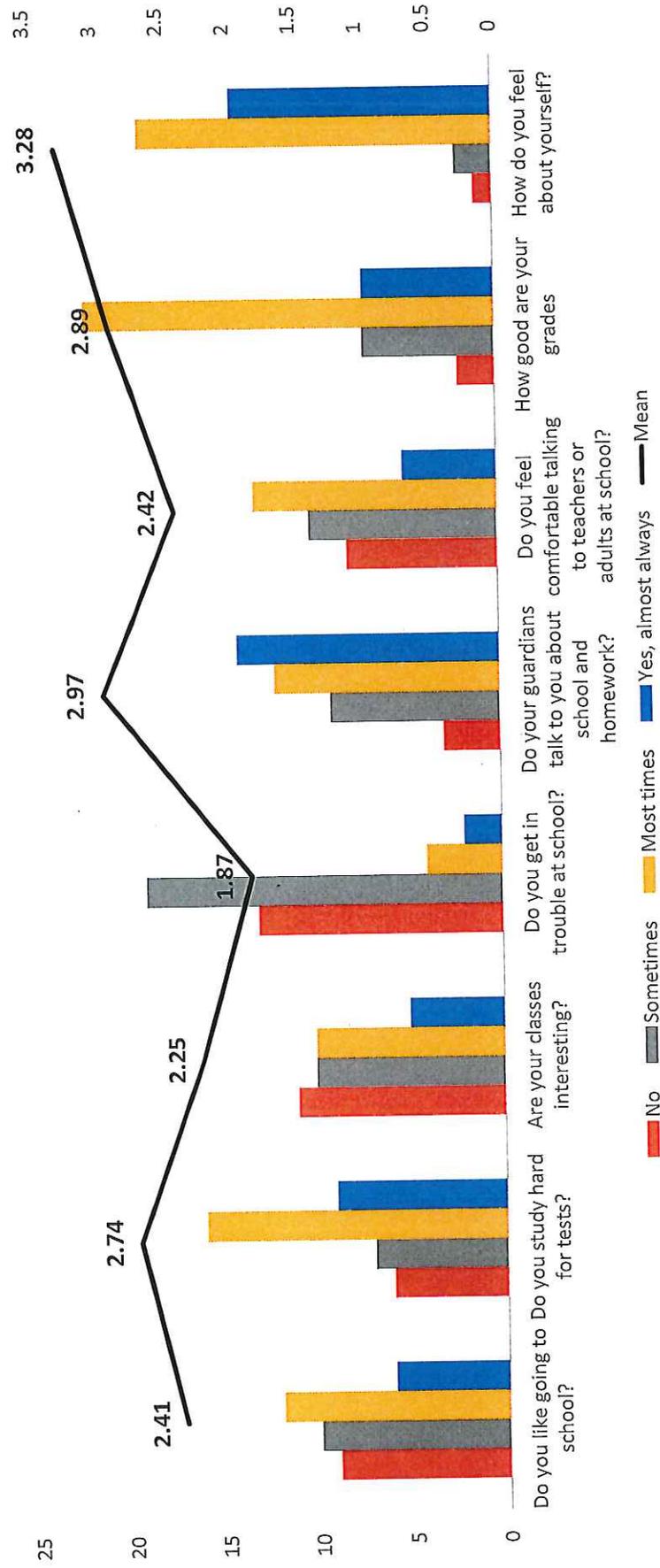
School Life

School Extra-Curricular Activities

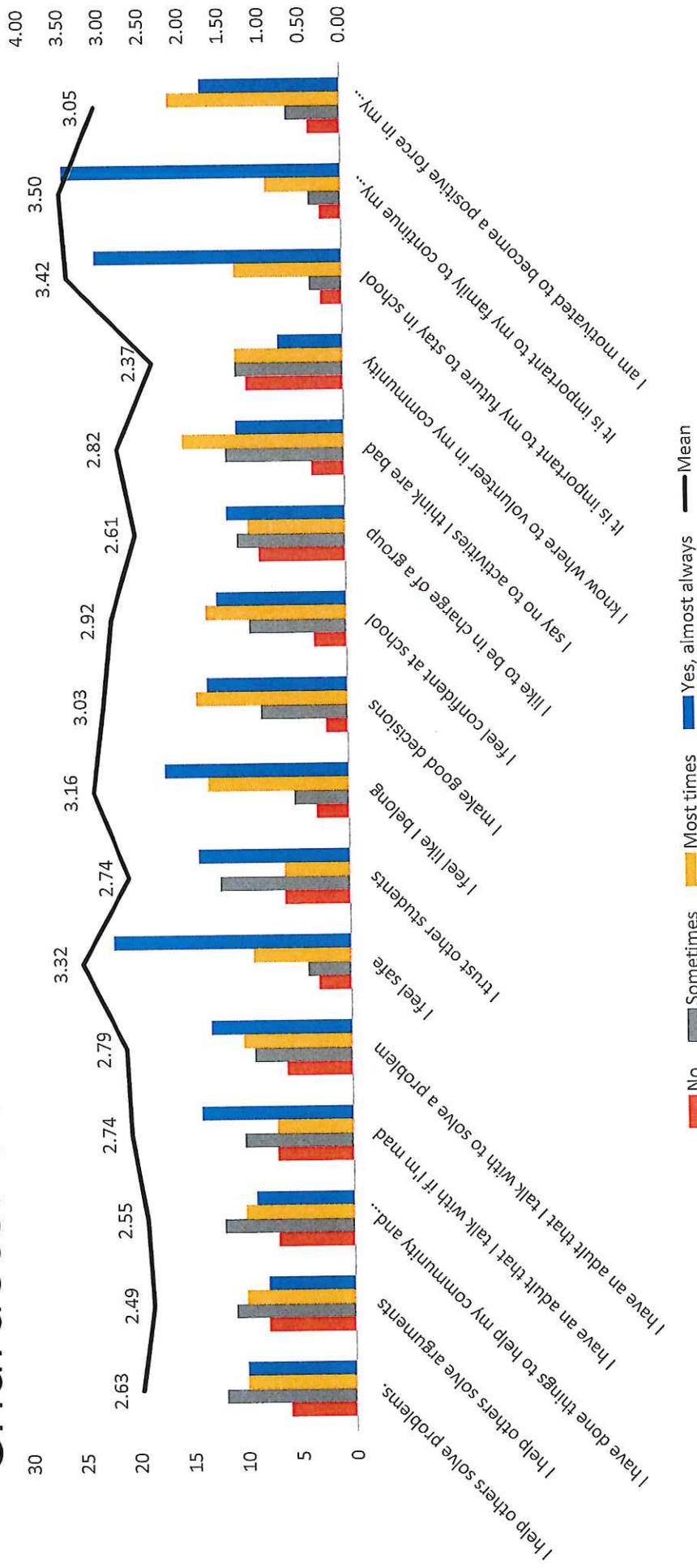


- **32%** of NS Respondents plan to attend a school summer program.
- Average quarterly attendance at school is **40.8 days** (2.3 absences per quarter)
- The average GPA of reporting NorthStar students is **2.35**. *(based on OPS report cards that included GPA)

School Engagement



Character Self-Assessment



Gang involvement – self report

- 36/38 NorthStar students indicate that they are not in a gang and don't intend to be in one ($M = 1.05$, $s = .229$).
 - Two students said they are not in a gang but want to be.
- This is **less than** the state reported rate of 3.3% for 8th graders (2014 Nebraska Risk & Protective Factors Student Survey (NRPFS) Data), and is on trend with declining rates of gang involvement for the state.

Risk Activities

- NorthStar students report **no or very little** risk activities.
- Those students who report engaging in risk activities most often indicate fighting or threatening physical harm in the last month – less than the state rate.

NorthStar Students are excited!

- Basketball
- Computers & tech
- Spending time with people at NorthStar
- Field Trips
- Gym
- Games
- Camp
- Making friends
- Lacrosse
- Camping trips
- Rock Wall
- Swimming
- The canoe expedition
- Summer camp
- The future!

NORTHSTAR